

SITTERSON
DOUGHERTY
ASTONE
ESPOSITO

FREE PLANET



Sed

In the wake of a grueling revolutionary war, the planet Lutheria has declared itself the first completely free planet in human history.

Tasked with the planet's defense, the Freedom Guard has narrowly fended off multiple probing attacks by the bellicose Orouran Empire. But now, with the full might of an Orouran fleet bearing down on them, the revolutionary heroes of the Freedom Guard have a rapidly closing window to act before their entire planet is engulfed, once again, in war...

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FREE PLANET

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NET

ESTIMATED
TIME UNTIL
CONTACT: 30
MINUTES.

Lack of Reavers
implies conquest--
not spoliation--as
primary objective.

Dreadnought presence
indicates high-level
commitment to and
importance of action.

Auxiliary Screammers
create possibility of
multiple fronts within
area of operations.

Aegis antiship weapons 73%
operational; insufficient to
neutralize Dreadnought.

Limited opportunity to
engage outside Lutheran
space, rapidly depleting.

WE HAVE
TO TEST THE
ORCHALEUM
BOMB SOME
TIME.

THE WRECK
INCIDENT PROVES
HOW **EFFECTIVE**
IT COULD BE.

KATJA!



HOW CAN YOU EVEN SUGGEST THAT?!



WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE?



THE WRECK WAS A MASSACRE! WE'RE GOING TO REPEAT IT?!



RECKON THE OROURANS WOULD HESITATE?



OR IDA FOR THAT MATTER?



THE ESTIMATED BLAST EFFECT WOULD DEMOLISH THE DREADNOUGHT.



DEMOLISH ALL THOSE RAW MATERIALS?



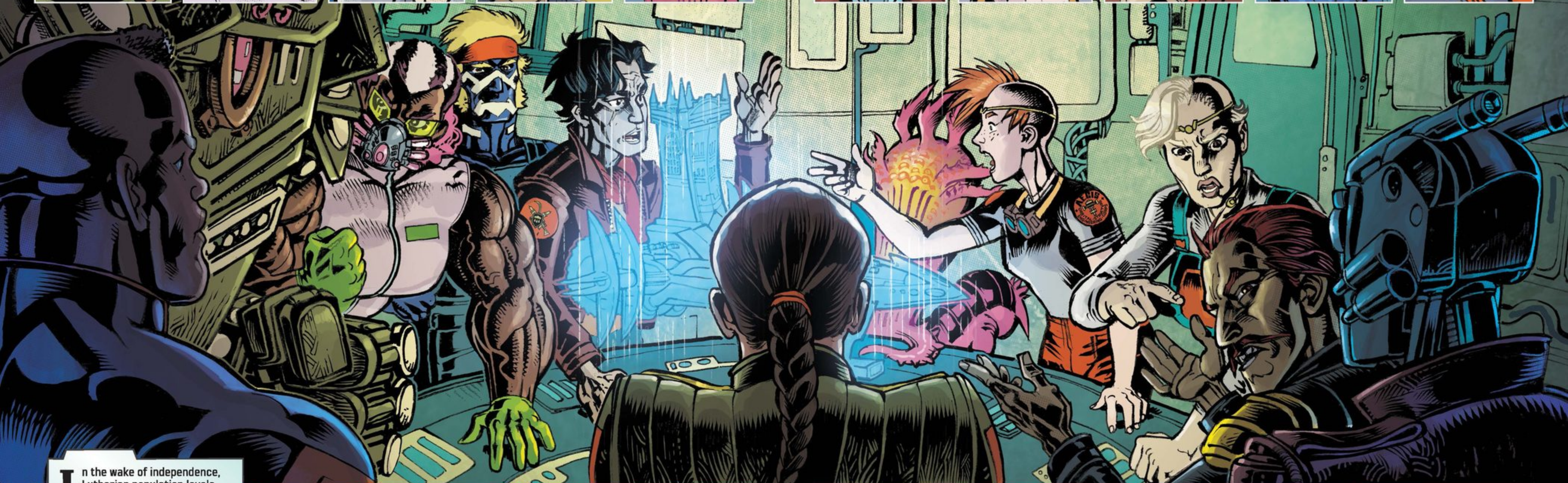
IF WE MOVED QUICKLY, THERE'D BE NO RISK TO THE SURFACE.



HOLLOWING OUT OUR MOUNTAINS FOR FUEL IS BAD ENOUGH.



EVEN IF ALL OUR KESTRELS WERE OPERATIONAL...



In the wake of independence, Lutheran population levels held steady at 6.5 million, with repatriating Alliance loyalists replaced by a flow of immigration that, wholly unregulated, would become a flashpoint of controversy within the fledgling society.



Population dispersion changed significantly, however, with the planned orchaleum industry downturn, the resulting exodus from utilitarian extraction and refinery sites, and the increasingly dense concentration of Lutheran citizens within the planet's handful of cities.



25 MINUTES UNTIL CONTACT.

WE NEED THE SALVAGE. PREFERABLY PRISONERS TO INTERROGATE.

THE BOMB PREVENTS THAT. IT'S UNTESTED. RISKY.

VICTOR...



...TIME TO SHOW OFF THAT TACTICAL BRILLIANCE EVERYONE RAVES ABOUT.



Alliance cruelty has been extensively documented in the Lutheran literature, inclusive of Far Star Security efforts to quell pre-Revolution labor revolts and military initiatives to combat insurgencies during the grueling three-year war.

Upon this mostly barren, hostile landscape, housing a sparse, rural and Surroko population all too willing to support the insurrection, guerrilla tactics proved an effective counter to the Alliance's numerical, technological and financial superiority.

While the prevailing Lutheran view holds that the guerrillas' sole targets were the Alliance and its proxies, it would be disingenuous to claim that the revolutionary forces were, themselves, innocent of harm to civilian noncombatants.

The disconnect is rooted in the received wisdom that the revolution garnered universal support. This was far from the case, however, as significant numbers of managerial staff, technicians, scientists and larger landholders remained loyal to the Alliance.

IT'S NOT JUST IDA TROOPS.

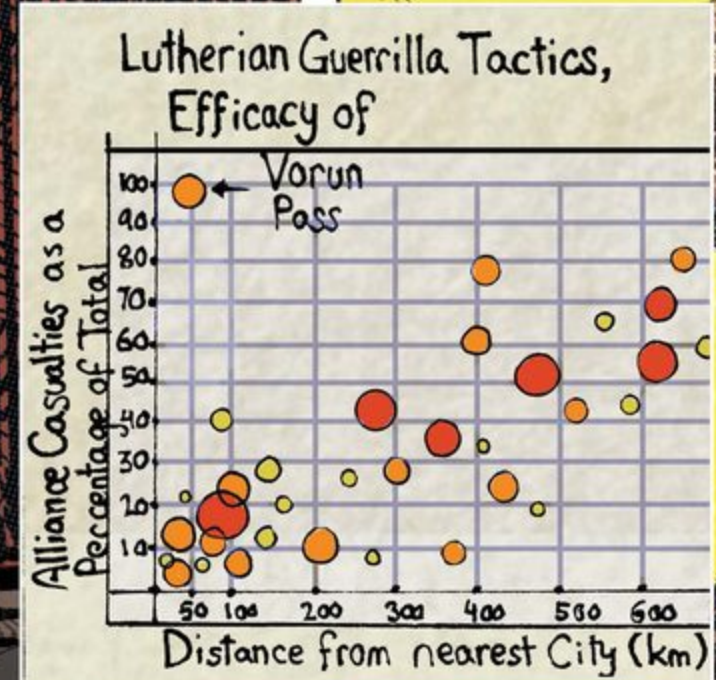
KEEN, WE CAN'T LET THEM AUGMENT THE 8TH AND 11TH.

REFINA IS FILLED WITH COMPANERES... WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS BLOOD...

...EITHER THEIRS OR OURS.

As ever, even the most just, most righteous conflicts become inevitably marred by the euphemistically described collateral damage.

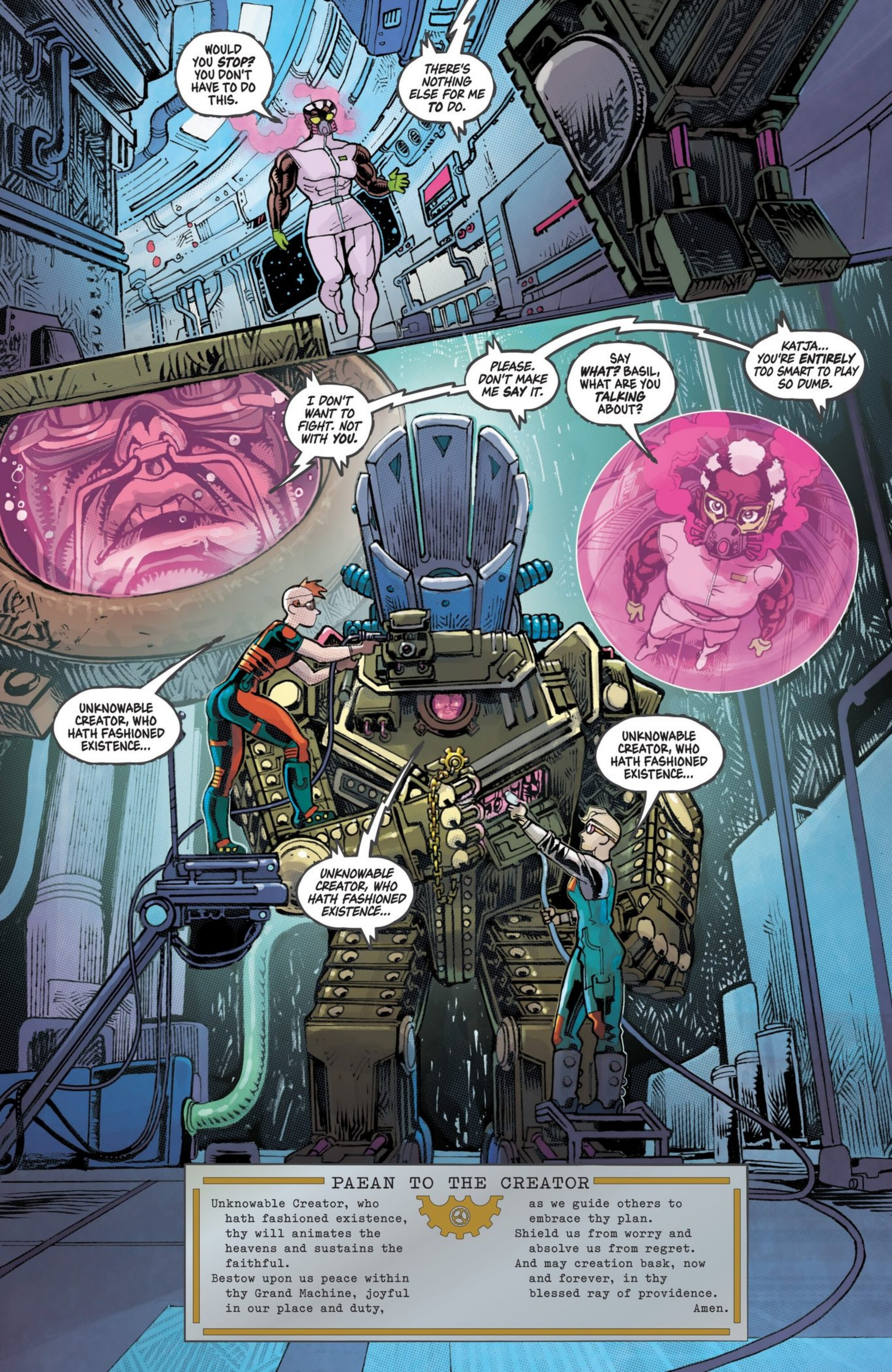


WHEN THEY ADVANCE? WE RETREAT.

BUT WHEN THEY RETREAT? WE FOLLOW.

WHEN THEY STOP? WE MAKE IT MISERABLE.

AND WHEN THEY WANT TO FIGHT? WE ATTACK.



WOULD YOU STOP? YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.

THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR ME TO DO.

I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT. NOT WITH YOU.

PLEASE. DON'T MAKE ME SAY IT.

SAY WHAT? BASIL, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

KATJA... YOU'RE ENTIRELY TOO SMART TO PLAY SO DUMB.

UNKNOWNABLE CREATOR, WHO HATH FASHIONED EXISTENCE...

UNKNOWNABLE CREATOR, WHO HATH FASHIONED EXISTENCE...

UNKNOWNABLE CREATOR, WHO HATH FASHIONED EXISTENCE...

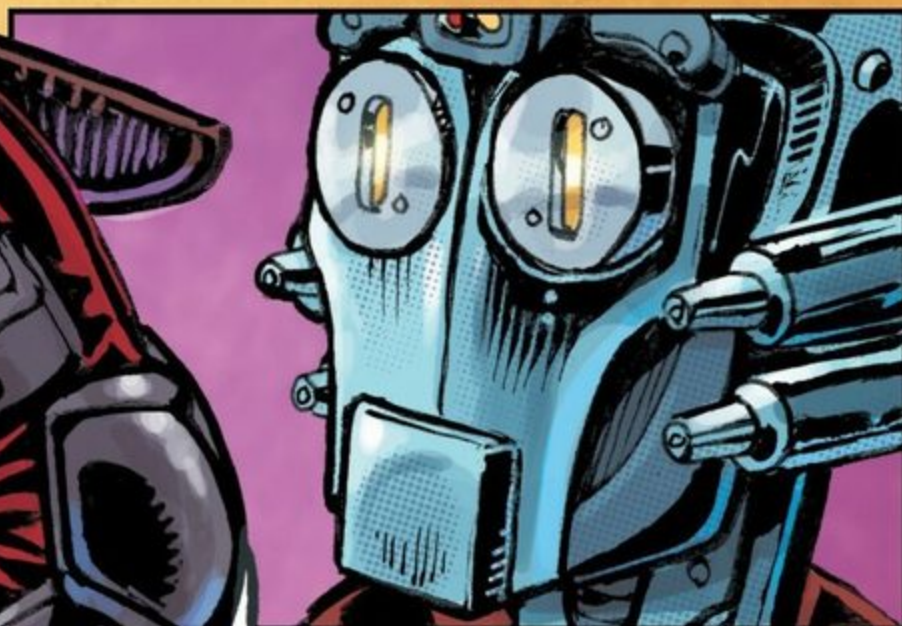
PAEAN TO THE CREATOR

Unknownable Creator, who hath fashioned existence, thy will animates the heavens and sustains the faithful. Bestow upon us peace within thy Grand Machine, joyful in our place and duty,



as we guide others to embrace thy plan. Shield us from worry and absolve us from regret. And may creation bask, now and forever, in thy blessed ray of providence. Amen.







I'm **done**.

Done pretending that this:

Lutheria, Teomekhy, Machinists...

Old rules, new rules, no rules...

All of it.

That it ain't pointless, **meaningless**,
not even worth fighting for,
If it doesn't come from **love**,
for creation, for life,
for each other.

If that ain't part
of the **Grand Machine**,
then I don't want it.



GRACCHON CHOSE
US TO BE **ROLE**
MODELS, KEEN. TO
FORGE THE PATH TO
HIS VISION.

AND YOU'RE
FLOUTING THE
MOIETY SYSTEM.
PUBLICLY. IN
ITS EARLIEST
DAYS.



JUST SO YOU
CAN GET
YOUR--

EXCUSE
ME...

FIVE MINUTES
REMAIN.

IT'S **NOW**
OR NEVER,
VICTOR.

THE PLAN

SCREAMERS ARE THE CLOSEST ALLIGATOR.

WE CAN'T NEUTRALIZE THEM ALL, SO DISTRACTION'S THE GOAL.

P rairial 526 stands out as an inflection point for the newly independent Lutheria. In addition to the debilitating trade crisis, the month's vicissitudes also included the planet's most difficult military challenge since the armistice.

CRACK PILOT NOTWITHSTANDING, MOOKIE WILL NEED HELP.

I VOLUNTEER.

NO.

YOU'RE TOO IMPORTANT. I-- WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE YOU.

I'LL GO.

While the Orbital Liberation and Defense Battalion had successfully warded off raids and probing attacks, these paled in comparison with the existential threat posed by a Orouran Dreadnought accompanied by a full squadron of Screammers.

Prior to independence, a full-scale Orouran assault on then-Aides would have been inconceivable, as the Alliance would have dedicated the entirety of its military might to keeping the universe's sole source of orchaleum out of Orouran hands.

But in the absence of a mutual defense agreement and in light of the Luthertian proscription on orchaleum exports, there was little incentive for the Alliance to come to its former member planet's aid, if Lutheria could have even brought itself to request it.

WITH THE SCREAMERS ENGAGED, THE BOARDING PARTY CAN APPROACH.

DOCKS ARE TOO HEAVILY GUARDED.

THAT'S WHY WE'LL MAKE OUR OWN ENTRANCE.

OPERATIONAL KESTRELS INDISPOSED, HAULERS UNARMED...

THE RAY OF PROVIDENCE HAS THE JUICE!

NO TIME TO INTEGRATE IT WITH THE HAULER'S CONTROLS.

EXTRAVEHICULAR COULD WORK...

...BUT WE'D BE VULNERABLE.

I'LL DO IT.

During the trying years to come and amid the brutal austerity measures necessitated by the 526 trade crisis, the Freedom Guard's heroic defense of Lutheria became a source of planetary hope and pride.

The Prairial Defensive has been covered from every conceivable angle but has always been positioned, without exception, as an emblematic example of the culture and values to which Lutheria aspires.

I'M ALREADY A WALKING TANK. MAY AS WELL STRAP A CANNON TO ME.

BASIL!
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW DANGER--

NOW YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT MY SAFETY?

Over time, Basil Usmansen became memorialized as a folk hero: The selfless medical doctor who reluctantly put down his tools, becoming a heavy weapons operator simply because it was necessary to defend the Lutherian dream.

WE GOT ARTILLERY MOUNTS FROM THE WRECK!

AND WE COULD TAP INTO BASIL'S ORCHA CELL!

WE'LL MAKE THE RAY EVEN JUICIER!

BOARDING PARTY IS BIG BAZ, KEEN AND ME.

AND JACKSON.

GLORIA, HE CAN'T BE TRUSTED!

IN A FIGHT HE CAN.

Similarly lauded are the Freedom Guard's Machinists and the ingenuity arising from their unmitigated freedom of experimentation. Alone, however, these factors are insufficient to explain the Prairial Defensive's place in the Lutherian consciousness.

TRUSTED TO KILL INDISCRIMINATELY! WE WANT LIVING PRISONERS!

SHOULDN'T WE REACH CONSENSUS FIRST?

The Prairial Defensive is viewed as a defining moment for the planet, not only as proof that an independent Lutheria could survive--despite the widely held Alliance belief that a rapprochement was imminent--but as a pure expression of Lutherian ideals.

The battle was celebrated as being predicated upon and proof positive of that which Lutherians viewed as best in themselves: the unification of disparate voices, succeeding not in spite of their ferociously defended freedom and autonomy but because of it.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'LL BE OUTNUMBERED AND SURROUNDED.

THAT'S RIGHT. TALUN, WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE OROURANS?



EXCEEDINGLY LITTLE OUTSIDE OF THEIR RIGIDLY HIERARCHICAL--
EXACTLY.



WE DON'T NEED TO DEFEAT A DOZEN SCREAMERS, JUST THE DREADNOUGHT.

AND WE DON'T NEED TO DEFEAT EVERY MARINE ONBOARD, JUST THE C.O.

In keeping with revolutionary ideals, Lutherian military hierarchy was designed to be as flat as possible, granting divisions, squads, even individual actors a shocking degree of latitude in carrying out tactical actions.



It was this very flexibility that made it possible for Victor MacLiu to successfully seize a Dreadnought in the midst of celestial combat, overcoming the brute force of the rigid, yet brittle, Orouan hierarchy.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the Orouan military structure--despite its inflexible hierarchy--also granted its officers a large degree of autonomy, thereby maintaining efficacy amid the Orthodox Teomekhean Church's stranglehold on ansible technology.



NOBODY MOVE!

THIS SHIP HAS BEEN COMMANDEERED BY THE ORBITAL LIBERATION AND DEFENSE BATTALION.

TELL YOUR PEOPLE TO STAND DOWN.

Within the Orouan meritocracy, officers were chosen--among other metrics--for their ability to decide on tactical matters in alignment with larger strategic concerns, of which there was varying awareness in accordance with rank and necessity.

OPEN SCREAMER AUDIO CHANNELS.



THIS IS ADMIRAL HIERAX. WE HAVE FAILED IN OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.

THE GREAT SUN THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.



WE SHALL DEFEY EVERY FOE.

WE SHALL SUFFER EVERY HORROR.



FOR WE DO SO IN HIS RADIANT LIGHT.

Thus, the Prairial Defensive has become a core component of Lutheran identity, as not only an expression of revolutionary ideals but as vindication of an overarching strategy centering in-the-moment tactical concerns.

Interestingly, despite universal praise for the tactics that granted the Freedom Guard its improbable victory alongside an even more improbable zero Lutheran casualties, the exact nature of Victor MacLiu's contributions remain controversial.



Of course, it should not go without mention that the seemingly discrete categories of strategy and tactics become increasingly murky upon examination, such as with tactical concessions made in service of larger strategic goals, as well as the inverse.

WHAT...
WHAT HAVE
YOU DONE?!

MY
DUTY.

MARINES...

As ever, tactics and strategy exist on a spectrum, only separated by degrees of knowledge, proximity, and perspective.



INITIATE
CAPTIVE
PROTOCOLS.



GLORIA,
I KNOW YOU
ARE EXTREMELY
BUSY...

...BUT I BELIEVE
A CELEBRATION
IS IN ORDER.

AN
AFFIRMATION
OF LIFE IN THE
WAKE OF--

FERGAL'S
WAITING ON
THESE PRISONER
TRANSPORT
FORMS.

I'LL CALL
IF I NEED
ANYTHING.



Just as worker barracks were easily repurposed as prisoner of war camps during the Revolution, it was a simple matter for the Lutheran government to convert them, in turn, to more permanent carceral facilities.

THERE IS
SOMETHING
ELSE.

IN CONSIDERATION
OF FWEHA AND KEEN'S
VERY PUBLIC DISPLAY, I
WOULD LIKE TO REVISIT
THE MATTER OF OUR
SHOWING--

TALUN.

What was significantly more complicated was determining how to square the clear necessity of maximum security prisons with Lutheran ideals of freedom, autonomy and egalitarianism.





HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE BEEN OVER THIS?

WE HAVE NEVER FINISHED THE CONVERSATION, GLORIA.

THE OLD RULES ABOUT LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS, HUMANS AND ROBOTS; THEY NO LONGER--



DO YOU SEE ALL THIS? TRANSPORT FORMS, DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS, EQUIPMENT REQUISITIONS, AFTER-ACTION REPORTS...



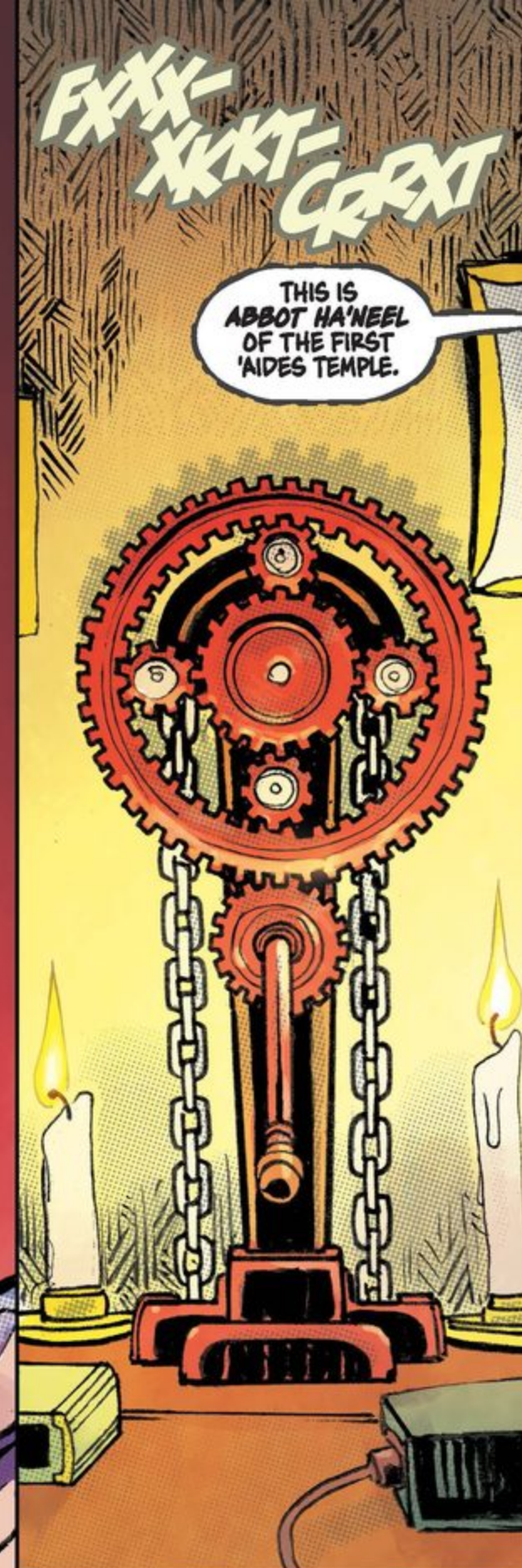
AND THAT'S ON TOP OF THE OROURANG, THE SEPARATISTS, THE AEGIS FALLING APART, FOOD SHORTAGES, AND KEEPING THE TEAM FROM KILLING EACH OTHER.

TALUN, WITH ALL THIS...I JUST...



I CAN'T KEEP TALKING ABOUT THIS.

IT'S TIRESOME AND I'M ALREADY EXHAUSTED.



FXXX-
XXKT-
CRXT

THIS IS ABBOT HA'NEEL OF THE FIRST AIDES TEMPLE.

DO YOU COPY? OVER.

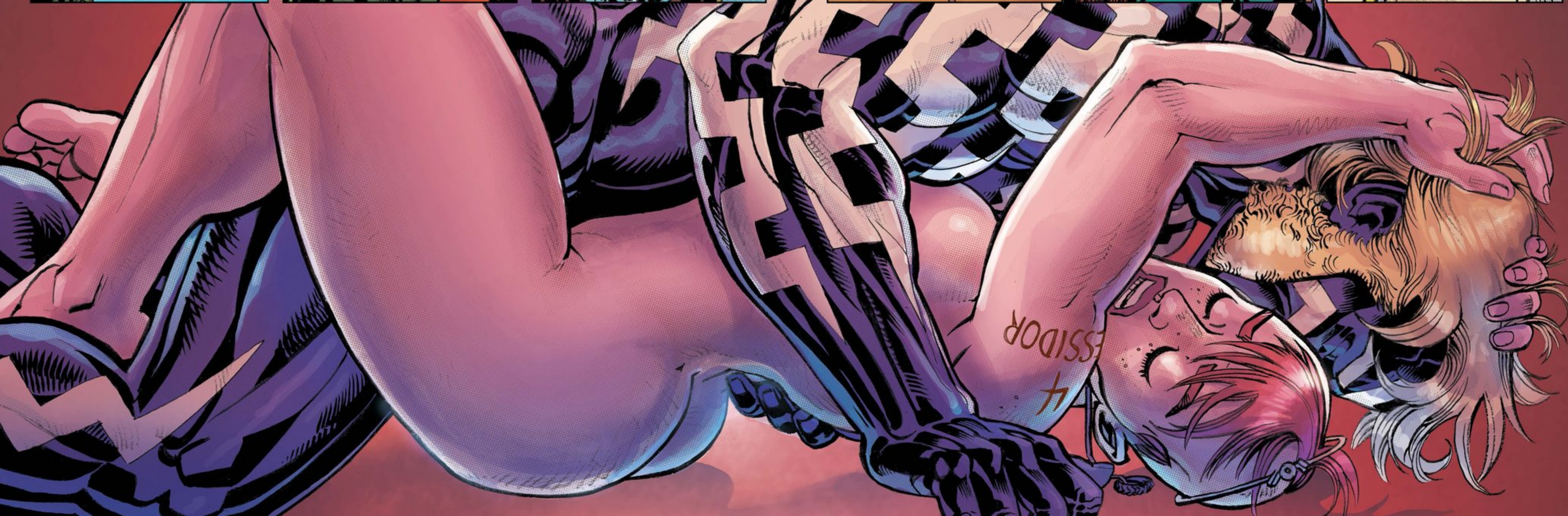


DO YOU COPY? OVER.



CREATOR...

KKKHHK... REALLY YOU, HORA?





ENGINEERING CONSENT: REDISCOVERY AND THE KIRKARDI ENGINE

BY DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

When engaging with Lutheran history, a specific picture of Interplanetary Development Alliance power comes into focus: A brute wielding the inelegant, twin cudgels of military force and coercive economic measures. However, while these two were, to be sure, significant weapons in the Alliance's statecraft arsenal, their liberal utilization in the Lutheran context should be viewed neither as representational nor as indicative of broader Alliance strategy.

For the Alliance, blunt tactics such as military actions and trade embargoes were always last resorts, arrived at reluctantly only after other methods had failed, other options exhausted. The reason was a simple one: Their overwhelming expense. As with so much else in the Alliance, its expansion strategy was informed most heavily by the balance sheets of the corporate entities that both undergirded and sat atop the Alliance system.

The nature of the expenses associated with military force and coercive economic measures is vast and sundry: The costs of interstellar travel, the destruction of critical infrastructure, damages to colonial relations, work and transportation stoppages, the opportunity costs inherent to military redeployment, and, most of all, the wide-ranging and oftentimes unpredictable effects of the preceding on the Alliance's intricately interconnected supply chain and economic system.

In light of the above, a variety of inducements were deployed to ingratiate the Alliance to planets and bring them under its sway, inclusive of beneficial trade arrangements, foreign investment and the provision of goods ranging from weaponry to foodstuffs. However, the most effective measure – and, consequently, the most frequently utilized – was the facilitation of technological development.

While the Guiding Principles on Dispersion Populations were successful in curbing the worst and most heinous aspects of the rediscovery process, they were insufficient to govern the myriad complexities of introducing advanced technology to less developed populations. To address this issue, the Alliance prioritized the development of the Rediscovery Protocols.

Crafted by a committee comprising experts from the domains of business, military, science, government and, notably, religion, the Rediscovery Protocols provided a framework for interactions with indigenous people from initial observation to eventual cooptation. Consisting of an exhaustive catalog of eventualities, the Protocols were refreshed and updated with lessons learned on an annual basis.

The Rediscovery Protocols paid special attention to the role of the Teomekhean Church, stipulating levels of presence and oversight for each stage in the process. While certainly indicative of Teomekhy's pervasive influence, these measures were also practical due to the Church's monopoly on much of the essential knowledge constituting the bedrock of Alliance technology. Notable examples include the engines powering fifth-dimensional travel and the rightfully celebrated Kirkardi Engine.

Though almost certainly apocryphal – with the device's true origins buried in the Church's closely guarded athenaeum – the Engine was purportedly invented by Pope Kirkardi IV. The Teomekhean account claims that, on his 100th day of fasting, Kirkardi IV was blessed with a brief glimpse of the Grand Machine's inner workings. Without breaking his fast, Kirkardi IV set to



In accordance with the Rediscovery Protocols, Alliance dignitaries and technicians monitor the planet Thouros from an orbiting satellite.

frenzied work, crafting extensive designs for an engine capable of producing clean, reliable energy from a wide variety of simple inputs. The legend goes that he passed away immediately upon the completion of his blueprints.

Realizing Kirkardi IV's dream was a priority for his successor and, after more than a decade of prototypes and refinement, the Kirkardi Engine was birthed into the world. Though its energy output was far below the levels required by Alliance technology, it represented a monumental improvement over draft animals, water, wind, steam, coal and other energy sources utilized by less technologically advanced planets.



So closely guarded were the secrets of the Kirkardi Engine that only cardinals and the pope himself had the requisite knowledge to construct them.

Guiding the provision of the Kirkardi Engine was the Teomekhean Church's esoteric initiatory framework. To commission a Kirkardi Engine and inaugurate its operation required knowledge that was only revealed to a Teomekhean cleric upon their attainment of the rank of bishop. Accordingly, the Rediscovery Protocols mandated that a Teomekhean bishop or higher accompany all Alliance delegations from the initial observation period through the adoption of the Kirkardi Engine.

Once operational, a Kirkardi Engine's care was

entrusted to two Machinist votaries. The pair were responsible for scheduled maintenance as well as the ongoing customization that was necessary to ensure that the device continue to accept as inputs a given planet's most readily available and abundant resources. However, after ten years of operation, a bishop would again be required due to the Kirkardi Engine's planned functional obsolescence.

With regard to deployment, the Rediscovery Protocols carefully circumscribed the circumstances in which a Kirkardi Engine could be provided. Broadly speaking, Kirkardi Engines were provided in order to curry favor with a specific faction, choose a winner in an ongoing conflict, accelerate the process of resource extraction or some combination of the three.

This established methodology – blending withheld, proprietary knowledge and strategic deployment – was remarkably effective. Kirkardi Engines were gifted to carefully selected indigenous populations, which – with exceedingly rare exception – welcomed the device and the Alliance's conditions with open arms. The trade was a beneficial one, as even a small number of Kirkardi Engines could spur development that would have otherwise taken centuries.

Continued maintenance and the provision of additional Kirkardi Engines, however, were always contingent upon compliance with Alliance requests, fostering dependency and subservience in equal measure. While it was not uncommon for indigenous populations to flex their autonomy, they did so under the salient threat of a cessation of support, including the extraction of essential Teomekhean clergy, whose presence, import and evangelical efforts also contributed to the development of Alliance soft power.

Clearly, the Alliance was not above bringing military power and punitive trade measures to bear upon more rebellious members of the human diaspora. It remained a rarity, however, due to both the immediate and dramatic benefits of Alliance technology and the consequent reliance upon it. Though it was well within its power to brutally conquer or summarily annex planets, the Alliance instead elected to carefully observe and guide their development, sometimes over the course of centuries. As a result, rediscovery – from initial observation to formal absorption – was most often accomplished peacefully, without the deployment of military units and, significantly, with the benefit of steadily increasing economic outputs.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

WITH DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

Congratulations, intrepid reader, on completing the first leg of your intergalactic journey. But while this marks the conclusion of our inaugural arc, the *Free Planet* project remains an ongoing concern and, accordingly, we have prepared for your enjoyment an embarrassment of riches. I have exceedingly exciting details to share with you in this regard but prior: It simply would not be an installment of Questions and Clarifications without the very same.

Without further ado, I welcome back our very first two- and, subsequently, three-time querent...

Dr Foyroushi,

Hope this day finds you in good health.

Having just witnessed a dogfight in space between a Lutheran Kestrel and Orouran Reaver causing a marvelous topsy-turvy sight to us earthbound watchers, have the Orourans always had an autocratic government? How did it develop? Do all Orourans want it?

Thanks,

Mario Botte

First and foremost, welcome back to Questions and Clarifications, Mario; it is always a joy to read one of your thoughtfully crafted missives. I hope your sterling example of diligent, intentional reading will serve as a guiding light to your fellow readers.

To your questions: I believe it is first necessary to draw a distinction between the Orouran nationality and the Orouran ethnoracial group, both of which are ever expanding, the first with the incorporation of new planets and the second through the Orouran genetics program. While most imperial territories can be confirmed as having previously possessed a non-autocratic government, the nature of how the Orouran's meritocratic autocracy first developed lays – like so much history of the human diaspora – shrouded behind the veils of time, state propaganda and the broad recrudescence of humanity's regression upon its new homes, making anew decisions already made long ago. As for whether all Orourans are in favor of their autocracy, while the matter is exceptionally controversial among those of the Orouran nationality, sentiment is overwhelmingly favorable among the ethnoracial group.

And yes, I remain hale and hearty, Mario; you

need have no concern about the *Free Planet* project slowing down on my account.

While I always fully expected to receive insightful questions like those submitted by Mario and Seb, I have been shocked and delighted to begin receiving another type of submission: Reader-created renditions of our cast. In hindsight, of course, I have a clear view of my foolishness; of course those *Free Planet* readers possessing great artistic skill, upon experiencing Jed Dougherty's detailed and rich renderings of Lutheria, were inspired to create great art of their own!



Our first submission comes from James Coats, whose work – including *Dino Beasts*, *Ninja* and *Family Fun Comics* – can be purchased at PowerPulpComics.com. James' depiction of Keen Surroko deftly captures his quiet, thoughtful, brooding nature as well as the menace lurking just below the surface. That being said: Readers, I implore you to please exhibit grace and

understanding with regard to Keen’s kuttuk grip; issue #4, with its explanation of proper kuttuk technique, had not yet been released when James created this stunning piece.

Dear Dr Foyroushi,

Schools of thought tend to crop up quickly in historical study; on which topic are you and your colleagues most deeply divided?

Many thanks for sharing your work with us,

Sebastian Aycock

Bravo, Sebastian! For it is important, nay, essential to keep front of mind the fact that histories are always written – for better and worse – by people. Specific differences of opinion and interpretation are, naturally, myriad, but the most significant, even foundational misalignment exists with regard to the Alliance’s expansion efforts. In addition to vociferous debate around past interactions with diasporic populations, there also exist entire fields of study dedicated to illuminating the longer-reaching impacts of Alliance actions on a wide array of domains, with every potential point of view represented regarding every possible issue on every known planet.

This vast complexity is something I have touched upon in this issue’s essay as well as that within the previous; however, I will also be expounding upon it in more depth in the months to come. As aforementioned: Details are imminent, so let us sally valiantly forth.

Hi Doctor,

Very much enjoying your articles on the infrastructure and mechanics of the galaxy. Would It be possible for the Lutherians to give their orchaleum to someone else, dismantle the military and live on their world peacefully?

Mario Botte

Would that it were, Mario and, of course: Congratulations on becoming our first ever triple-querent.

The primary challenge with regard to carrying out your proposal would revolve around the act of actually relinquishing Lutheria’s orchaleum. First, extracting the substance from the planet’s crust is a labor-, time- and capital-intensive process; if not for potential profit, there’s no reason to extract anything beyond the relatively small quantity required for domestic needs. What’s more, Lutheria’s monopoly on orchaleum works to underwrite the planet’s independence; or at least it did prior to the trade war. Finally, even without orchaleum, there would be no guarantee of Lutheria’s peace or independence,

as countless planets with no orchaleum whatsoever have found themselves victims of the Alliance, the Empire and their respective Expansion Protocols.

A fitting place to stop for this month, as it neatly segues into the *Free Planet* project’s first interlude, the two-issue **Expansion Protocols**. As teased throughout this installment of Questions and Clarifications, we will be revealing the mechanisms behind expansion throughout the universe, with a pair of issues dedicated to exploring first the Alliance methodology and then the Orouran strategy for absorbing members of the human diaspora into their respective hierarchies.

The first of these, *Free Planet* #7, will hit shelves in December, with art by the incredible **Ilias Kyriazis**, the cartoonist behind *Raymond Chandler’s Trouble is my Business* and recent comics for *Heavy Metal*. Kyriazis has delivered stunning, innovative work detailing the history of the planet Thouros, from its initial human discovery by a pair of arks to its inhabitants’ rediscovery and cooptation into the Alliance, millennia later.

In January, we will be blessed by the presence of **Tyrell Cannon**, of *The Schlub* and, with **Aubrey Sitterson**, co-creator of *BEEF BROS*. *Free Planet* #8 will present the reverse of the coin examined previously, with Tyrell’s kinetic, bombastic pages capturing the essence of the Orouran Empire’s crusade and its space marines’ march through the universe.

But prior to these exciting new installments in our ongoing project, the *Free Planet* volume 1 collection will be released in comic shops on November 26 and everywhere else on December 9. Of note, the Expansion Protocols issues will not be included in *Free Planet* volume 1; these collections will contain only the Freedom Guard-focused story, which picks back up in February with series cocreator **Jed Dougherty’s** return and a new six-issue arc launching in *Free Planet* #9.

Also not included in the *Free Planet* volumes? These letters pages, which continue to be a truly joyful and rewarding way to share my knowledge with such an erudite, cultured and serious audience. Thank you, as ever, for your diligent engagement with *Free Planet*; I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Aldous Foyroushi

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

NEXT ISSUE

Cover A



"We offer you freedom from war and deprivation."

Cover B

OCTOBER AT IMAGE



Author Immortal is a love letter to literature-as-magic-portal-fantasies like *The Unwritten* and *The Magicians* and hate mail to YA authors who use their fortune and power to make life hell for marginalised people. This story could easily have been dialectic in lesser hands, but Frank J. Barbieri [*Five Ghosts*, *Violent Love*] centres messy and daringly unlikeable humans and Morgan Beem [*Swamp Thing: Twin Branches*] creates enchanting watercolour art which makes the magic beautifully and petrifyingly real.



It's a bad time to be a Mexican. The time in question is 1943. **Death to Pachuco** is rooted in the real L.A. history of the Zoot Suit riots and the Sleep Lagoon Killer. This is a self-described Chino Noir. Henry Barajas [*La Voz De M.A.Y.O.: Tata Rambo*] and Rachel Merrill [*IZZY N JEAN*, *The New Yorker*] do the work here, taking us to a different time, showing what it was like, and how it wasn't so different a time after all.



In **Hector Plasm: Hunt The Bigfoot** roaming ghost-hunter Hector Plasm hunts the Bigfoot, even though that's well out of his area of expertise. Maybe ghost-Bigfoot will turn up before the end? This is the first of the Hector Plasm stories I've read, and Benito Cereno [*Blood & Thunder*], Derek Hunter, and Spencer Holt confidently drop you into a vivid world that balances the cartoonishly quirky and the surprisingly grounded. I certainly didn't feel lost just jumping aboard.



In **Spawn: The Dark Ages** the king of the Britons, Aurelianus, has problems with the Picts, the Saxons, the Hibernians and some kind of rival monarch who is a pagan Devil Spawn. All I've seen of this one is Liam Sharp's pages, which is basically all I need to see. Liam [*Starhenge*, *Green Lantern*] has been carving a space – with a battle-axe – as one of the best fantasy artists working today, his art seemingly actively classical in its grandeur.



Good Devils: Don't Play Fair with Evil compiles three short stories from David Brothers [*Time Waits*] and Nick Dragotta [*East of West*, *Absolute Batman*] and just goes off. *Absolute Batman* is obviously great work, but if you want to see what Nick does for the love of the game? It's here, and everything is brutal, thrilling, funny, messy and pure comics. It's a stolen muscle car of a 64-page special that will reward your time with the finest face punches anyone could wish for.

Kieron Gillen writes **The Power Fantasy**.

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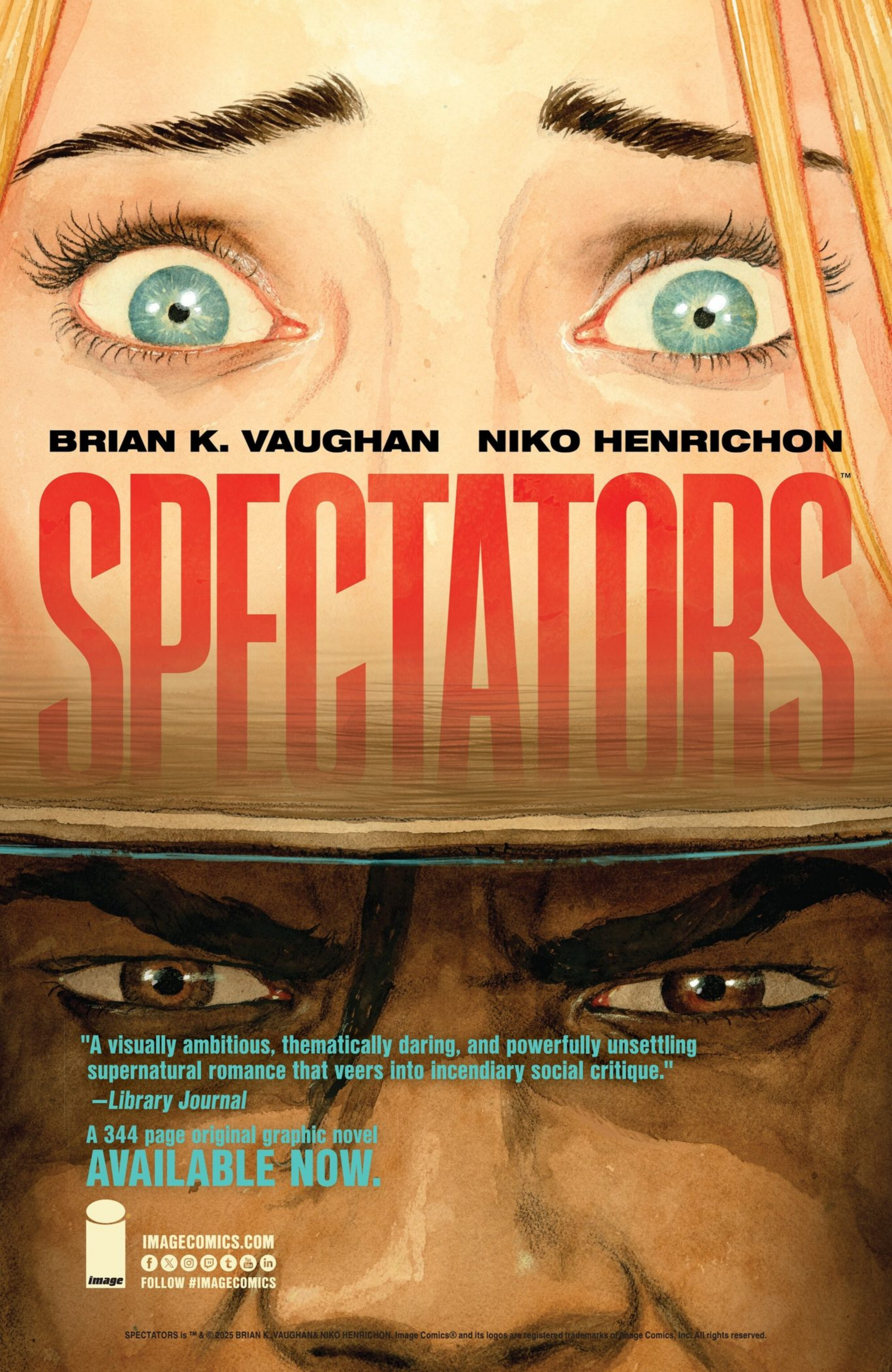


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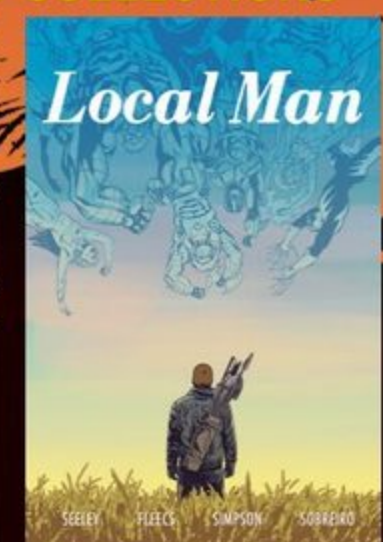
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“The price of freedom is blood...
either theirs or ours.”

—*Victor MacLiu*

